

# UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION


Leadership...Service...Accountability

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**TO:** School District Superintendents  
Charter School Directors  
Local School Boards  
Principals  
Other educators

**FROM:** Patti Harrington, Ed.D.   
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Utah State Office of Education

David N. Sundwall, M.D.   
Executive Director  
Utah Department of Health

**DATE:** April 30, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Swine Influenza

The Utah State Office of Education and Utah Department of Health are writing to you jointly in an effort to keep you updated on the status of Swine Influenza preparation in Utah and to provide materials that you may find useful in communicating with the residents of your district. Specifically, we are including with this letter a model letter to parents and recommendations for teachers and school personnel for identifying flu symptoms in children. We are also giving you our commitment to continue providing pertinent information as we receive it.

As you may be aware, the Utah Pandemic Influenza Response Plan references school closure as one of a number of community mitigation strategies designed to limit the impact of a potential influenza pandemic in Utah. Recommendations for school closure and other mitigation efforts are based on two factors: 1) observed disease severity and 2) the extent of transmission in Utah. The Utah plan specifies that school closure be considered when human cases are detected in Utah (Utah Pandemic Response Level C or greater) and the severity of occurring cases exceeds the severity of seasonal influenza (Pandemic Severity Index Category 2 or higher). At this time there have been no confirmed cases of Swine Influenza identified in Utah. The Pandemic Severity Index for Swine Influenza has yet to be established, largely because of significant differences in observed case fatality measures in the U.S. and Mexico. To date there has been one fatality in a confirmed case in the United States.

Given this information, at this time the Utah Department of Health (UDOH) and the Utah State Office of Education (USOE) do not anticipate recommending statewide school closures upon

identification of a confirmed human Swine Influenza case in Utah. However, this is an evolving situation and recommendations may change as more information becomes available.

School officials should, therefore, plan ahead in the event that schools are required to close. District residents should also be informed that they should prepare for the possibility of such closures. Pandemic preparedness materials can be found on UDOH and USOE websites:

<http://www.pandemicflu.utah.gov/buscom.htm>

<http://www.schools.utah.gov/ADMIN/utahpandemicinfo/>

Regarding individual school closure, federal guidance developed for the current swine influenza A (H1N1) suggests that, "Dismissal of students should be strongly considered in schools with a confirmed or a suspected case epidemiologically linked to a confirmed case." Upon identification of a Swine Influenza case in a Utah elementary or secondary student, UDOH and/or local health departments will conduct a rapid case investigation and assessment of the school for evidence of infection transmission. If evidence of transmission within the school student population is identified, UDOH and the USOE will recommend that local officials consider closure of the individual school. However, again, this is an evolving situation and recommendations may change as more information becomes available.

We also ask that if you observe an increase in absenteeism or an increase in the number of students and staff suffering with flu-like symptoms, you follow district protocols for communicating with local health department officials.

Thank you for your cooperation in this matter. Additional information about Swine Influenza can be found on UDOH and CDC websites: <http://health.utah.gov/epi/SwineFlu/> and <http://www.cdc.gov/swineflu>.

attachments: Model Letter to Parents

Recommendations for Teachers and School Personnel

cc: Utah State Board of Education